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ABSTRACT

This paper describes how staff development contributed to the effectiveness of four elementary schools along the south-Texas border. It attempts to determine the use of the strategies and techniques developed during staff development, the types of assistance teachers received to enable them to apply new techniques, and the differences teachers perceived in student performance as a result of adopting these techniques. The four schools selected for the study serve a predominantly Hispanic student population. Two schools were high performing and two schools were low performing. Data were collected through interviews with teachers and administrators, documentation on staff development, and filed observations. Cross-site analysis was used to find commonalities and differences among the campuses. Findings suggest that staff development needs are sequential and should be delivered with a timeline to accommodate implementation of initiatives and to give teachers time to reflect upon their utilization of strategies. Results suggest that a support system to facilitate collaboration and collegial coaching are crucial to foster proper utilization of strategies and to develop expertise. (Includes 55 references.) (RJM)

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Enhancing Student Performance Through Staff Development in Successful Border Schools

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Enhancing Student Performance Through Staff Development in Successful Border Schools

ABSTRACT

This study explores how staff development contributed to the effectiveness of four elementary schools along the South Texas border. An attempt was made to determine how teachers used the strategies and techniques developed during staff development, the type of assistance teachers received to enable them to utilize new strategies and apply new techniques, and the differences teachers perceived in student performance as a result of their implementation of these strategies and techniques.

The four elementary schools selected for study were serving a predominantly Hispanic student population and were situated along the South Texas border. Two schools were high performing and two schools were low performing according to the Academic Excellence Indicator System report and the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills results. Data for this multiple case study were collected through interviews with teachers and administrators, documentation of the staff development, and field observations. Cross-site analysis was used to find commonalities and differences among the campuses.

Findings of this study suggest that staff development needs to be sequential and systematically delivered with a timeline to accommodate implementation of initiatives and to give teachers time to reflect upon their utilization of strategies. Similarly, findings suggest that a support system to facilitate collaboration and collegial coaching are crucial to foster proper utilization of strategies and to develop expertise. The study also revealed that teachers' perceptions of students' abilities effect the implementation of initiatives aimed at success for all students. While this study supports the importance of staff development with scheduled time for reflection, there is a need for additional studies focusing on other schools.

INTRODUCTION

Continuous staff development, a basic characteristic found in effective schools, offers a systematic process by which teachers can change classroom teaching practices, personal beliefs and attitudes, and ultimately the learning outcomes of students (Carter & Michael, 1995; Guskey, 1986; Lezotte, 1992; Stellar, 1988). Staff development includes in-service education, on-the-job training, continuing education, professional growth, professional development and renewal (Harris, 1980). Staff development, which may be in the form of "clinical supervision, independent study, peer supervision, consultation, individual growth planning, diagnostic/prescriptive systems, or self-paced instruction, is by nature designed to help people learn new techniques and improve their skills within the system" (Harris, 1989).

A review of the literature on staff development indicates that research of staff development in successful schools along the South Texas border where the student population creates a unique teaching challenge has not been conducted. One study by Scribner and others (1995) focuses on different aspects--governance, school community collaboration, family involvement--in their research of several South Texas border schools. However, staff development was not a focal point for the study.

Therefore, this study offered an opportunity to focus on staff development and its application in successful South Texas border schools. The study was conducted in four elementary schools in South Texas. The dimensions of staff development which were studied included: the planning involved in preparing the staff development, the content that was presented to teachers as part of staff development, the continuity of staff development, and the supportive system that the campus used in order to assist teachers as they implemented new strategies and initiatives.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Staff development is a vehicle school districts use to ensure that change takes place in today's schools. Researchers define staff development as a systematic process utilized by school districts to improve or influence professional knowledge, to produce effective job performance, to implement new programs, to improve existing campus programs, and to change or improve organizational outcomes (Bradley, Kallick, & Regan, 1991; Castetter, 1992; Castle, 1988; Guskey, 1986; Hodges, 1996; Jansen, 1995; Raack, 1996; Richardson, 1995; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). Prior research also indicates that improved classroom performance by classroom teachers results in positive

student achievement (Brophy & Good, 1984; Guskey, 1986; Hodges, 1996; Lezotte, 1992; Smylie, 1988; Sparks, 1986; Zigarelli, 1996).

Further, staff development provides teachers with information and opportunities to expand their knowledge of concepts and skills or to establish new programs within the organization (Glatthorn, 1984; Smylie, 1988). Staff development may include formal and informal approaches designed to improve teachers' performance and to provide assistance as teachers work to implement changes (Ovando & Harris, 1997; Ovando, 1998). Researchers found that successful schools used staff development as a means to effect change (Little, 1993; Schiffer, 1980). School districts and campus administrators tend to choose the model of staff development that is most suitable to their goals and meets their needs.

Staff Development Models

Models of staff development include the individually/self-guided model, observation assessment model, the curriculum development/school improvement model, trainer of trainers model, and the inquiry model (Harris, 1989; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). Different characteristics distinguish each model.

In the Individually/Self Guided Staff Development Model the teacher designs his/her own learning by determining his/her own needs, formulating learning goals, setting a pace for him/herself, and selecting staff development activities, which the teacher feels enhances his/her teaching ability. The teacher determines the content of the staff development, the depth of research and knowledge, and eventually the level of competency that he/she achieves (Ovando, 1991). This model, based on adult learning theory, adult development, and learning styles, acknowledges that teachers perceive and process information in different ways. Since teachers are at different stages of development, they have different personal and professional needs and experiences, different preferred philosophies, and different learning styles; thus self-discovery and self-direction significantly influence teachers' learning behaviors and their learning goals (Ovando, 1991; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). The individually/self guided staff development model is effective with those individuals who need to proceed at their own pace (Levine & Lezotte, 1995).

The Observation Assessment Model, based in McGreal's 1982 work on teacher evaluation, requires that teacher mentors observe the classroom performance of their peers for the purpose of collecting information and providing teachers with constructive feedback about their performance. Teachers together with their mentors target specific areas for growth and development (Harris 1986; Little, 1981; Joyce & Showers; 1988; Joyce & Showers, 1996; Sparks & Loucks-

Horsley, 1989). In this manner teachers are able to get a different view of their performance with students and to improve their instructional methodology (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). As teachers improve their classroom performance, student achievement improves (Leggett & Hoyle, 1987).

Although teachers are reluctant to endorse this model because it is generally associated with teachers' evaluations by the administration, the observation assessment model is most effective when teachers cooperatively engage in classroom observations and provide each other with constructive feedback. When the teacher and observer are taught systematic observation techniques, teachers are more likely to see positive results from their efforts to change; thus, they are more likely to continue trying to improve (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). The observation assessment model tends to build collegiality and collaboration among colleagues on the campus (Joyce & Showers; 1988).

The Curriculum Development/School Improvement Model encompasses curriculum development, program design, and school improvement programs. The objective of this model is to engage teachers, who are closest to the problem and who have a better insight as to the needs of the organization and its population, in problem solving and in planning for improvement (Killion, 1993). In this model teachers are asked to develop or adapt curriculum design programs, or to engage in systematic school improvement towards the improvement of classroom instruction and curriculum. To successfully complete curriculum development and school improvement projects, teachers must acquire specific knowledge or skills through reading journal articles, doing a review of literature to research specific topics, holding discussions with colleagues, and conducting observations of specific programs already in progress (Hodges, 1996).

Teachers are inclined to use their teaching experience and unique perspectives to frame problems and develop solutions. Teachers who work on curriculum development or school improvement plans, are involved in the identification of instructional areas requiring review, revision, or redesign and in the planning of more appropriate curriculum or improvement programs (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). Effective curriculum development and implementation necessitates staff development. For teachers to work effectively on curriculum they have to improve their ability to think through problems and become visionary in order to anticipate the implementation of the curriculum (Glickman, 1986; Wildman & Miles, 1987). Teacher involvement in curriculum development and school improvement causes changes in attitudes and the acquisition of skills as individuals or groups work toward the solution of a common problem; thus, teachers learn to appreciate individual differences and become skilled in group leadership (Hodges, 1996). Effective schools utilize a strong staff development

program to enhance the probability that changes occur and which will result in student improvement (Hodges, 1996; Jansen 1995; Joyce, Murphy, Showers, & Murphy, 1989; Lezotte, 1992).

In the Trainer of Trainers Model teachers are involved in the training of co-workers. Teachers, who have become trainers serve on planning committees, help assess the needs of school personnel, and explore research-based approaches. They select content, determine staff development objectives, and schedule training sessions. Teacher trainers deliver needed staff development, model targeted skills, monitor the implementation of strategies they teach during staff development, and provide the support that teachers need (Hinson, Caldwell, & 1989; Joyce & Showers, 1988, Todnem & Warner, 1994; Westbrook & Tipping, 1992).

The trainer of trainers model is based on the premise that teachers feel more comfortable exchanging ideas with colleagues, receive more practical suggestions when their peers are trainers, and are more likely to play a more active role in planning and presenting workshops when they assist their peers. Teachers tend to value their peers' expertise if they determine that colleagues have a clear understanding of how a new strategy works with real students in real classroom settings (Hodges, 1996).

The trainer of trainers model seems to be an efficient means for large numbers of teachers to receive staff development from colleagues. This model is most effective when campus teachers with specific expertise provide staff development for their colleagues and when they are available to provide support during implementation of an initiative. Because of their close proximity to trainers on the campus, teachers are more likely to take risks and to feel a sense of security as they utilize new ideas (Reynolds & Cuttance, 1992; Smylie, 1988).

In the Inquiry Model teachers utilize their expertise to collect data regarding professional problems, reflect upon the collected data, perform research on a topic to solve the problems, formulate possible solutions, determine the feasibility of implementation, and predict consequences. The implementation of new ideas leads teachers to re-evaluate data, refine their instructional behaviors according to their findings and their priorities, or to find other alternatives (Colton & Sparks-Langer, 1993; Richardson, 1993; Sparks-Langer, 1992; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989, Valli, 1992; Vaughan, 1993).

Inquiry of school wide problems by collaborative teams of teachers results in problem solving which effects the organization and promotes school improvement projects that teachers are likely to support. The inquiry model is most effective when used in conjunction with school improvement. Finding solutions to school-wide dilemmas creates an environment conducive to cooperation and professionalism and brings to light possible improvement of

instructional methods which may result in the improvement of student performance (Brophy & Good, 1984; Colton & Sparks-Langer, 1993; Elam, Cramer & Brodinsky, 1986; Watts, 1985; Glickman, 1986).

Staff development is usually an avenue used by schools to implement initiatives, to improve organizational outcomes, and to improve teachers' classroom teaching practices which results in improved student performance (Stellar, 1988; Hodges, 1996). Further, staff development is critical for schools with a majority/minority context. For instance, schools along the South Texas border have a population that is highly mobile, thus students may attend more than one school during the school year. Because teachers have to adjust their teaching to accommodate all their students, staff development is a vital component of all campuses. However, some campuses seem to be more effective in meeting the needs of their students. This study was designed to add perspective to the current staff development that schools use, to assist in identifying those strategies that best enable teachers to implement new techniques in their classrooms, and to reveal the extent to which teachers in effective schools receive support or assistance as they implement new techniques or strategies.

METHODOLOGY

Although prior studies on staff development have been conducted in various states, these seem to have a single focus and appear to be limited to certain regions; thus, there seems to be a need for a comprehensive analysis of staff development in schools found along the South Texas border. Toward this end, the purpose of this study was to explore how staff development contributed to the effectiveness of four elementary schools along the South Texas border. This qualitative research was guided by the following questions: 1) How does staff development contribute to the effectiveness of high and low performing elementary schools? 2) How do teachers use teaching strategies, techniques, and skills studied during staff development? 3) What kind of support or assistance do teachers receive to apply new strategies, techniques, or skills in the classrooms? 4) What differences do teachers perceive in student performance resulting from their use of strategies, techniques, or skills studied during staff development?

Design of the Study

This study was conducted utilizing a multiple case study format to find similarities and differences in staff development across campuses in four different elementary schools in South Texas. Interviews, document analysis, and observations were used to obtain information about the campus and staff

development. Multiple sources provided the researchers with both broad and specific information about the dimensions of staff development--planning, content, continuity, and supportive culture. Data were collected in four school settings during the school day. Twelve to fourteen teachers on each campus were interviewed during the teachers' conference period, before school, and after school. Interviews were conducted and data to substantiate the responses were gathered. Interview data collected from campus personnel were analyzed using constant comparative analysis in order to identify convergent and divergent characteristics, elements, or patterns across participants' responses. Document analysis was used to verify activities, behaviors, and events. Records and documentation showing staff development provided for teachers within the school campus were reviewed. Content analysis, a technique that permits data to be categorized efficiently, facilitated the examination of content to determine whether or not data were supported. Content analysis of documentation, such as staff development programs, agenda topics, and program evaluations, was conducted to identify themes which illustrated the focus and the scope and sequence of staff development.

Each dimension of the staff development program in each district and in each school was examined. To formulate a case study, data collected from each school were analyzed and were compared to find commonalities in the campuses' approach to staff development. The staff development components that were examined included the planning that went into the staff development program, the content of the set of workshops that constituted staff development, the continuity of the staff development program, and the support system that the school district had in place to assist teachers implement the strategies and skills that they learned.

Selection of Locale and Sampling Procedures

In this multiple case study the selection of the study sites was purposeful. Two school districts which were involved in the Effective Border School Research and Development Initiative (Scribner, et al., 1995) were chosen. Two elementary campuses, one high performing and one low performing, in each of the two school districts were selected for closer study. The high performing campuses in each case were schools that had an eighty or higher percentage passing rate on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), the annual statewide criterion referenced assessment of students in third through tenth grades, and were either recognized or exemplary on the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) report, which indicated district and campus performance on student achievement, attendance, passing rate, dropout rate, and special

program participation. The low performing campuses were selected based on a sixtieth or lower percentile score on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), were given a rating of acceptable or low performing on the AEIS report, and a student demographics similar to the high performing schools.

In both school districts central office administrators in charge of staff development were interviewed about prior staff development efforts. At each campus a principal and one of her assistants as well as teachers with five years or more of experience at the same campus were interviewed. Teachers' responses were collectively reported; however, specific answers which were atypical, as well as those typically given, were examined in order to obtain a glimpse into the school culture and teachers' orientation.

Instrumentation

In qualitative research, the instrument validity and reliability depends on the skills of the researchers as interviewers, observers, and recorders. Effective researchers must be familiar with the activities, events and setting under study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). One of the researchers' previous experience as a teacher and administrator enhanced the understanding of the educational settings. The interviewer had extensive experience in the field of education and was familiar with the elementary school settings, elementary students, and curriculum for elementary schools.

Information on staff development in the two school districts was gathered through interviews, visits to the campuses, and through document analysis. The central office administrator provided the overall student assessment data and the documentation about staff development that teachers in the school district attended. The campus administrative staff confirmed the staff development emphasis.

The interview guide included open-ended questions to ascertain the teachers' involvement in staff development, their perception of student progress, and the support they received from campus administration and from their colleagues. The information abstracted through this process was used to delineate the staff development focus and to formulate a descriptive analysis of staff development provided by each school district and campus.

Information from artifacts and documents was gathered. Document analysis indicated tendencies and themes pertaining to specific staff development emphasis.

Data Gathering Procedures

Data procurement was completed in three stages: interviewing central office staff and campus administrative staff, interviewing teachers, and reviewing the documentation. First, central office administrators were interviewed to find the broad based district concept of staff development. Information about each campus and about the staff development program was obtained. Second, the campus administrator was interviewed in order to ascertain the scope of the staff development. Further, staff development provided for teachers, the consultants and their areas of expertise, the focus of staff development over a period of three years, and the monitoring that took place to ensure implementation of new strategies were also examined.

Campus principals were asked to identify teachers who had five years or more of experience on the campus. Teachers who were involved in the planning of the staff development program, in the training of other teachers, or in the implementation of the staff development program were included in this study. Twelve to fourteen teachers, the principal and one assistant principal from each campus were interviewed. Teachers were interviewed to identify individual characteristics that differentiated them from teachers on the other campus in the same district. An attempt was made to ascertain similarities and differences between staff development in the high performing schools and staff development in the low performing schools. Further, teachers' perceptions of student progress and performance as a result of their having used strategies studied during staff development were determined. Third, documentation of staff development conducted in the past was reviewed to expand upon the evidence collected from other sources.

FINDINGS

This multiple case study investigated staff development in high performing and low performing elementary schools along the South Texas border. The research questions focused specifically on the staff development and its contribution to the effectiveness of schools, the use of new strategies and techniques by teachers, the support or assistance that teachers received as they implemented initiatives or used new strategies, and the teachers' perceptions of student performance. Four dimensions of staff development were addressed. These included planning, content, continuity of staff development, and supportive culture. Cross-site analysis was utilized to confirm commonalities and differences among the campuses, particularly in the approach that campuses took to ensure

that the initiatives, strategies, and techniques were utilized by teachers who attended staff development.

The four dimensions of staff development clearly illustrated the approach that high performing campuses used to nurture and foster the improvement of teacher performance. (See Exhibit 1). First, planned staff development included time allocation to ensure understanding and proper implementation of initiatives as well as time for teachers to reflect upon the use of strategies as they implemented initiatives. Further, staff development was financed to ensure that teachers had opportunities to listen to nationally known consultants. These consultants shared their work with teachers and made follow-up visits to the campuses to ensure that implementation of initiatives was successful. Substitute teachers were hired to allow classroom teachers opportunities to attend workshops as part of the follow-up sessions. Second, the content of staff development was presented sequentially and systematically in high performing campuses. Both the district and the campus staff development focused on specific initiatives. The major difference was that high performing campuses addressed both the theoretical as well as practical aspects during staff development. The teachers on these campuses obtained a better working knowledge of initiatives. Third, continuity kept staff development focused on the initiatives in the high performing campuses. Sessions were set weeks apart to accommodate the implementation and reflection upon the implementation of initiatives and the utilization of strategies. Fourth, teachers in high performing campuses had a supportive culture that facilitated the implementation of initiatives and strategies. Administrative and collegial support was part of the culture of these schools. Collaboration among teachers, sharing ideas, and collegial coaching was practiced in the high performing campuses. Additionally, teachers were sent to other schools and school districts to see the proper implementation of initiatives.

In summary findings suggest that staff development in high performing campuses was planned to accommodate the time needed to present theoretical and practical aspects of an initiative and time allocated for continuity, implementation, and reflection. Findings also indicate that a supportive culture seems to contribute to the performance of the school. Teachers tend to implement initiatives and try new ideas when they have administrative support and collegiality exists among teachers.

Contributions of Staff Development

Comparisons of findings revealed a difference between high and low performing campuses. (See Table 1). Contributions to their effectiveness included continuous staff development, maximized learning time, enhanced

learning environment, and collegiality among teachers. In addition, findings suggested that in the lowest performing campus, the organizational environment seemed to be effected by teachers' perceptions of students' abilities.

Continuous Staff Development

Staff development in high performing campuses served to focus teachers on initiatives, strategies, and techniques that were used throughout the school. Findings indicated that staff development on all four campuses was continuous; however, differences emerged from the data. All four campuses utilized a trainer of trainers model of staff development, while the high performing campuses also used the observation assessment model. Regularly scheduled staff development was conducted on each of the four campuses; however, high performing campuses had staff development plans that included follow-up sessions to discuss implementation of initiatives and utilization of strategies.

Staff development was financed to ensure that teachers were able to attend several follow-up sessions on the same topic. Because teachers were being guided through frequent follow-up sessions as a part of the staff development plan that these schools were following, teachers began to see differences in their students' performances. As a teacher affirmed:

> "We get to attend staff development on how to improve our teaching. About once a month some teachers attend workshops on specific topics...By concentrating on student learning we are able to see what works best with our students. We have gotten some good results using this method."

Effective staff development had time allocated to ensure implementation of initiatives and time for teachers to reflect upon the implementation. Further, staff development in high performing campuses was presented sequentially and systematically with attention to the content of each session. The theoretical as well as practical aspects were presented during staff development to afford teachers a working knowledge of initiatives.

Teachers in high performing campuses were provided with the time that they needed to implement the initiatives. During staff development teachers on high performing campuses were provided with an in-depth information about an initiative, before they were expected to implement it. Teachers in these schools had four weeks to utilize new strategies and to reflect upon implementation of initiatives. As the month progressed teachers met to discuss implementation successes as well as barriers to implementation. Working collaboratively during

team planning meetings, teachers and principals of high performing campuses found solutions to implementation problems. As a teacher indicated:

> "Teachers receive suggestions about possible alternatives to use the new strategies during team planning meetings."

In addition to providing meaningful content, staff development included opportunities for teachers to see the applicability and practicality of techniques, thus they were able to implement initiatives with a higher degree of success. The major differences among campuses occurred in the implementation of strategies and initiatives studied during staff development. Teachers on each campus were provided strategies and materials to implement initiatives. However, in high performing campuses teachers were provided the theoretical as well as the practical aspects of an initiative before they were expected to implement it. This is reflected in the following teachers' comments:

> "We were shown how to use graphic organizers to help our students organize their thoughts. . . As we continued attending staff development on the writing process, we were taught how to grade a composition holistically. Now, I know how to help my students write better."

> "With the materials and the directions that they give us (during staff development), I am able to return to my class and try new ideas. That's what I always need. Having someone show me how to use the strategies in my classroom really helps me."

By contrast teachers on low performing campuses were provided with weekly staff development on different topics. However, they did not have time to implement an initiative or use strategies before staff development on a new topic was presented. Teachers were aware of different strategies and initiatives, but these were not always utilized in classrooms. As a teacher affirmed:

> "We have very good staff development, but we have so many things coming at us all at once that we don't have time to use half of the stuff."

Teachers on the low performing campuses also received staff development regularly. During these sessions the theoretical aspects of an initiative were covered; however, the practical aspects were not always addressed; consequently, teachers were aware of several initiatives but did not really know how to use the strategies to implement initiatives. This is reflected in the following teacher's comment:

"A hand-on approach would be good. I have learned so much, but I need to know how to really apply it with my students."

Because different topics were presented weekly, there was no continuity or was staff development sequential. As a teacher indicated,

"We are constantly being presented with new strategies. We don't go back or slow down so we can see if any of them work in our classrooms."

Teachers in low performing campuses struggled to find the practicality of using new strategies, thus initiatives were not always implemented as presented. The following teachers' comments illustrate their reasoning:

"My children don't learn that way so I change the strategies."

"I know my students can't really succeed when I give them so many things, so what I do is I use only what I know that they will learn."

Staff development in low performing campuses was scheduled regularly but did not have continuity. Additionally, time to implement initiatives and to reflect upon the implementation was not sufficient for teachers of low performing schools to successfully use new strategies. As one teacher indicated:

"What would help us is time to use all the materials they give us."

Another teacher affirmed:

"The techniques seem like they would work, but I don't have time to implement them before we are presented with new ideas."

In summary, based on findings, teachers in effective campuses were able to implement initiatives and use strategies. These teachers were given time to reflect on their implementation problems and to find solutions to problems. Teachers in low performing campuses were provided with staff development, but they did not have time to implement initiatives nor in some cases use any of the different strategies they learned. The concept that staff development was sequential and systematic manifested itself in high performing campuses.

Maximized Learning Time

All four campuses provided their teachers with staff development on cooperative learning and interdisciplinary thematic units. Although all teachers were provided with this staff development, teachers on each campus chose to utilize these approaches differently. On high performing campuses teachers worked as a team, planning vertically as well as horizontally, thus teachers were able to utilize both methods with their students across all grade levels. As a teacher affirmed:

> "During team planning we discuss new strategies we are to use. I sometimes have questions which I need answered before I know how to use new ways of teaching."

Although, they were provided with weekly staff development on different topics during the year, teachers did not have time to internalize concepts nor to implement an initiative or use strategies before staff development on a new topic was presented. This is reflected in the following teacher's comment:

> "We seem to be jumping from one thing to another."

Teachers were cognizant of different strategies and initiatives, but these were not always utilized in classrooms.

In summary, these findings support the need for sequential and systematic staff development which has continuity. Those campuses that devoted time to implement initiatives, to reflect upon implementation, and to find solutions to problems had a better success rate of full implementation of initiatives. At the same time, those campuses that implemented initiatives in a sequential and systematic manner had teachers whose classroom performance changed and students on these campuses seemed to improve their performance.

Enhanced Learning Environment

Teachers on high performing campuses were ready to work collaboratively as a team. Students were taught to work as a team. Their work displayed throughout the school reflected utilization of collaboration and cooperation. This is reflected in the following teachers' comments:

> "Students are always on task with no down time."

> "The campus has become a place where children learn at their own speed."

Teachers on low performing campuses perceived their students as not being capable of learning. Consequently, they chose to change the strategies which compromised the initiative. This is reflected in the following teacher's comment:

> "When I try new techniques my students seem to be lost so I change the activities and strategies until I know my students can do them without trouble."

In summary teachers who worked as teams tended to create an atmosphere of cooperation which in turn created a learning environment of cooperation, while teachers who worked in cliques or in isolation created an atmosphere of less trust and less cooperation among students and teachers.

Collegiality Among Teachers

Teachers on each of the four campuses received staff development on specific initiatives. Their schedule revealed that at least one day a week was used for team planning. Teachers were encouraged to assist each other with the implementation of initiatives and utilization of strategies; however, only the principals from the high performing campuses facilitated collegial coaching and collaboration among peers. Teachers worked collaboratively as a team. As a teacher affirmed:

> "In our grade level we plan together. We share ideas prepare materials during team planning. Teachers are always willing to help you if you ask for their ideas."

Teachers on each of the four campuses participated in staff development on specific initiatives. Their campus schedule revealed that at least one day a week was used for team planning. Teachers were encouraged to assist each other with the implementation of initiatives and utilization of strategies; however, only the principals from the high performing campuses facilitated collegial coaching and collaboration among teachers. These principals utilized the observation assessment model. Teachers were paired to facilitate a mentor system in which they could regularly visit each others' classrooms. Further, teachers in high performing campuses used strategies that fostered collaboration and cooperation among colleagues and students. Staff development was the vehicle that campuses utilized to ensure that their staff worked together toward the same goals at the same time. This is reflected in the following teachers' comments:

> "This year we are concentrating on reading strategies...

We have worked together during our team planning to prepare our lessons and to ensure we use those strategies she (the presenter) showed us. Teachers who have been to intense training during the summer help us implement the reading initiative."

Conversely, while teachers on the low performing campuses were encouraged to collaborate as a team, they tended to work in cliques or individually. Collegial collaboration and exchange of ideas were not facilitated; consequently, teachers who had difficulty understanding concepts tended not to utilize strategies to implement initiatives. These teachers did not have opportunities to see strategies being used. The following teachers' comments reflect this tendency:

"When I need help, sometimes I ask another teacher, but mostly I try to figure things out myself. If they (new ideas and strategies) don't work, I go back to the way I have done things in the past."

"Sometimes it helps to have someone to listen. It would be good if we could visit other teachers' classrooms to see how other teachers are using the strategies and ideas."

In summary a supportive school culture was a necessary element in the utilization of knowledge, strategies, and skills. Collegial support as well as administrative support were evident in the high performing campuses, while support was not as well defined in low performing schools.

Application of Strategies and Techniques

Findings pertaining to application of strategies and techniques indicate that teachers were more likely to utilize strategies and techniques studied during staff development if they proceeded to immediately use the strategies and to apply the techniques. (See Table 2). Teachers who received practical "hands-on" activities tended to use them immediately; thus, reinforcing their internalization of concepts and refinement of skills. Secondly, teachers in high performing campuses tended to collaborate and plan both horizontally and vertically. Because teachers planned together, they were able to discuss specific implementation problems with other teachers, thus, peer assistance was more prevalent in high performing campuses. As a teacher affirmed:

"During team planning we (she meant grade level team planning) discuss the new strategies we are to use. If we have questions,

we ask our team leader or one of the campus experts. That works out for me because I sometimes have questions which I need answered before I know how to use new ways of teaching."

Teachers in low performing campuses tended to delay the utilization of strategies and initiatives. They did not receive hands-on training on the use of strategies; consequently, the application of the concepts was not internalized by teachers. As one teacher affirmed:

"Strategies are not user friendly. They (the presenters) do not show us how to do, it, just what is expected at the end. What I need is how to get there."

Secondly, on these campuses teachers met by grade level to plan lessons; however, they divided up the work rather than collaborate. Consequently, teachers planned as individuals not as a team. The following teacher's comment illustrates this tendency:

"I try to make all my materials, but it would be nice to have someone in my same grade level with whom I could share my concerns."

In summary immediate utilization of strategies and techniques was dependent upon teachers receiving practical strategies and activities. Collegial assistance and sharing of ideas through collaboration enabled teachers to take risks and implement changes.

Support or Assistance for Teachers

Administrative and collegial support was provided to teachers in high performing campuses. (See Table 3). Campus administrators in high performing campuses facilitated collaboration among teachers. They provided guidance in the implementation of initiatives and facilitated collegial coaching. As a principal affirmed:

" I pair teachers in a buddy system to facilitate their helping each other implement new strategies and provide opportunities for them to discuss how they can improve the implementation of the initiatives."

"Teachers work well together. They share ideas and work together on instructional materials. Teachers plan together, but each teacher writes his/her own lesson plans. They use

each others' ideas but use their own personal way to bring life to those plans and ideas."

As a teacher confirmed:

"When we plan together how we are going to use the new strategies, I seem to get better results. When we find that things didn't work the way they were supposed to, we share with each other and sometimes we find that some of us got it to work.

Administrators in low performing campuses encouraged teacher collaboration but did not facilitate it by providing opportunities for teachers to work together as a team. These principals offered assistance; however, teachers were not always provided with the type of assistance that would facilitate implementation of initiatives and utilization of new strategies. As a teacher expressed it:

"Yes, they have offered to help, but they are so busy all the time to really help any of us."

Because collaboration was not facilitated, teachers in low performing campuses did not have a systematic way to collaborate, thus they tended to work in groups or cliques. Team planning did take place to some degree; however, team work on a campus-wide scale did not seem to materialize. As a teacher affirmed:

"I try to stay away from the workroom. I work better in my own classroom that way I'm left alone."

In summary teachers in high performing campuses implemented initiatives and strategies that were presented during staff development. These teachers were provided with opportunities to collaborate and work with their colleagues. The principals of high performing schools kept the lines of communication open to facilitate cooperation among personnel.

Perceptions of Students' Performance

Teachers in high performing campuses actually saw a difference in student performance. (See Table 4). Students on these campuses worked in teams, collaboratively producing team projects. The following teachers' comments reflect their perceptions:

"Our students work cooperatively in certain subject areas."

"I use the strategies that were emphasized during staff

development. My students learn to work together when they work in cooperative groups. I monitor each group providing input, but for the most part I try to let them work together to solve problems."

Whereas, teachers from low performing campuses did not always use the staff development strategies presented to them; consequently, they saw no difference among their students' performance. The following teachers' comments illustrate their views:

"They (administration) are always trying to get us to try new things. If I was to change every time we had staff development on a different topic, I would be in continuous change. Besides, my students need stability rather than so much change."

"I know that my students cannot really succeed when I give them so many things, so what I do is I use only what I know that they will learn. My children can not learn when I use the strategies that they (administration) show us. So I have to change those strategies and use different techniques to get my students to learn."

Students in low performing campuses were not encouraged to work collaboratively; consequently, they worked individually on projects. Collaboration was not prevalent among teachers nor students of low performing campuses.

In summary teachers in high performing campuses worked collaboratively as a team and taught their students to work in teams to achieve their goals. Teachers from high performing campuses saw a difference among their students when they used new strategies, while teachers in low performing campuses did not always use new strategies as they were presented during staff development; therefore, they could not see a difference in student performance.

Other Findings

Additionally, two important aspects of staff development emerged from the data. On the one hand, the organizational environment appears to affect the implementation of strategies. Another aspect refers to the teachers' expectations of students.

Organizational Environment

The school environment was different on each campus. The difference was dramatic in the physical entrance to the school and the humanistic approach used in the office area. The reception that a student, teacher, or parent received in the office set the tone for the rest of the campus. The high performing campuses had an inviting office area and a receptionist and administrative staff that were readily accepting of visitors and were ready to help anyone who entered the office. Teachers on these high performing campuses worked collaboratively as a school-wide team, planning both horizontally and vertically, and they taught their students to work as a team. Students' work displayed throughout the school reflected utilization of collaboration and cooperation. (See Table 5). As the principal affirms:

> "They (teachers) work with other teachers who are in the grade level above and below their grade level to plan vertically as well as horizontally."

On the other hand, the office area of the low performing campuses was enclosed in glass. Visitors to the office were addressed through an opening in the glass window. On these campuses there seemed to be a barrier that kept teachers at a distance not only from the administration but from other teachers. Teachers on these campuses were likely to work together when it was required such as during grade level meetings, but they did not use every opportunity to work as a team nor did they teach their students to work collaboratively. As one teacher expressed it:

> "Cooperative learning is fine for younger children. In the fifth grade I have to get students to work independently."

Teachers in low performing campuses tended to work in small cliques or individually and planned horizontally but not vertically. As is illustrated with a teacher's comment:

> "It would certainly help if I had someone in my grade level who would help me."

Because the support system that teachers needed to implement initiatives was not consistent on low performing campuses, some teachers were inclined to use some of the initiatives and strategies they were taught during staff development, but most teachers did not utilize strategies as they were presented.

Teachers' Expectations

Teachers' perceptions of students' abilities influenced teachers' choice of strategies or initiatives. The teachers in high performing campuses worked as teams and tended to create an atmosphere of cooperation which in turn created a learning environment of cooperation. This is reflected in the following teachers' comments:

> "My partner and I work together to plan lessons, we bring speakers to our classes, and we share instructional materials."

> "Since the implementation of math strategies, the lessons are more meaningful for students...Because they now have techniques that they can use, teachers feel that their efforts to teach students even the most difficult skills are successful."

Teachers in low performing campuses worked in cliques or in isolation and created an atmosphere of less trust and less cooperation among students and teachers. Further, teachers on the low performing campuses did not believe that students could learn if they used new ways of teaching. They believed that they knew their children better than anyone and felt that those strategies would not work with their students. Consequently, they chose to change initiatives and strategies or chose not to use those strategies presented during staff development. This sentiment is evident in the following responses:

> "After all I know my students better than anyone. I know what they can and can't do."

> "What's the point in my using anything new with my kids. They don't learn any way. I use strategies that I know have worked for me in the past."

CONCLUSIONS

This case study of staff development in four elementary schools along the South Texas border indicated that staff development was used as a means to inform and train teachers on the implementation of initiatives. Two high performing and two low performing campuses were examined to find how staff development contributed to their effectiveness. This study focused on four dimensions of staff development: planning, content, continuity, and supportive culture. While these dimensions appeared to be important contributions to both high performing and low performing campuses to some extent, each campus took

a different perspective in terms of continuous staff development, utilization of strategies and techniques, administrative and collegial support provided to teachers, teachers' perceptions of students' abilities, and the organizational environment.

Continuous staff development ensures that teacher receive sequential and systematic training on theoretical and practical aspects of initiatives and strategies. Staff development which focuses on a broad overview of an initiative followed by in-depth staff development with emphasis on specific implementation of strategies tends to accentuate the utility of the initiatives. Thus, teachers who utilize both theory and practice to learn the applicability of initiatives have a better chance to actually use the new strategies and implement new initiatives. This conclusion is congruent with the work of Fitch and Kapp (1990) and Levine and Lezotte (1995) which indicates that practical oriented staff development is an essential component of effective schools.

When staff development has continuity and is scheduled in monthly intervals, time is allocated for teachers to internalize concepts, implement initiatives, and reflect upon implementation efforts. Reflection provides teachers with opportunities to refine strategies and to find solutions to implementation problems. Lack of time reduces opportunities for reflection and for implementation of initiatives. Therefore, it can be concluded that time for teachers to attend staff development, to implement initiatives, and to reflect and refine strategies before other staff development opportunities are scheduled, is critical for proper internalization of initiatives and successful implementation of improvement efforts. This supports Calderhead (1992), Reuter (1992), and Vogt and Au (1995) notion that time for reflective thinking is necessary for proper internalization of initiatives.

Administrative and collegial support systems facilitate the implementation of initiatives. Support provided by administration sets the tone for a positive campus climate. When principals maintain an environment conducive to collaboration and cooperation among colleagues and allocate time for reflection, teachers are more inclined to implement initiatives. The lack of a formal support system to provide assistance as teachers attempt to implement initiatives negatively effects teachers' willingness to use new strategies. Consequently, lack of collaboration and cooperation among colleagues leads to teachers working in cliques or in isolation. Teachers' meetings to discuss program implementation, the articulation of implementation problems, and openness to solve implementation dilemmas are favored to facilitate implementation of initiatives and utilization of strategies. Thus, it can be affirmed that a formal support system to facilitate collaboration among colleagues, peer assistance, and collegial coaching are additional outcomes of staff development as Crone and Tiddle

(1995) maintain. This confirms previous research by Fitch and Kapp (1990) which suggests that provisions for support and collaboration among teachers are an integrated part of follow-up activities designed to facilitate transfer and application of staff development training into the classroom.

Teachers' perceptions of students' abilities influence teachers' usage of new strategies. Teachers, who believe their students are capable of learning, tend to use strategies to implement initiatives or seek ways to utilize new strategies to help students learn. Conversely, teachers who feel that children can not perform if new strategies are used tend to continue using the same teaching styles. Teachers, who have higher expectations of themselves and of their students, tend to foster an atmosphere where students work together to create products. Thus, it can be concluded that a positive campus environment creates a school where teachers have high expectations of themselves and of their students and are more likely to take risks and to try new ideas. This conclusion reinforces previous research on effective schools by Stellar (1988) and affirms the work of Hodges (1996), Joyce and Showers (1996), and Levine and Lezotte (1995) that staff development enhances teachers' performances which in turn effects student performance.

The organizational environment created by the campus staff tends to have an effect on the attitude of teachers. Campuses that are open and inviting stimulate teachers to work collaboratively in order to implement initiatives and to find solutions to implementation barriers. On the other hand, campuses with barriers to communication create a lack of interest in collegial collaboration, implementation of initiatives, utilization of new strategies, and ultimately result in poor student performance. Thus, it can be concluded that a school culture that is conducive to the promotion of program implementation, facilitates communication among teachers. When application of strategies and initiatives in the classrooms is promoted through teachers' observations of other classrooms, strategies tend to be used to implement the initiative more frequently. Teachers, who observe other teachers implementing initiatives, tend to gain a greater insight into the different aspects and the successful implementation of the initiative. Teachers, who work together sharing ideas and finding solutions to implementation problems and use newly learned strategies, become supportive of each others' efforts. As several researchers suggest, creating positive working relationships through self reflection, mentoring, and collegial coaching promotes trust among teachers and facilitates communication (Joyce & Showers, 1995; Little, 1981; Joyce, 1990; March, Peters, & Adler, 1994; Vogt & Au, 1995) and are promising approaches to enhance implementation of knowledge and skills.

This study affirms the research of effective schools (Levine & Lezotte, 1995; Lezotte, 1992; Purkey & Smith, 1983) in that staff development is a critical

component to achieve student success. Effective staff development includes planned sessions which have a sequential content that is delivered systematically as well as continuity and a support system that facilitates implementation of initiatives and utilization of strategies. The support system becomes a crucial link in the implementation of initiatives. The study is congruent with previous work on staff development by March, Peters, and Adler (1994). Further, campuses which use collaboration to utilize the strategies that are given during staff development tend to create environments that teach students to work collaboratively; hence, student performance seems to be enhanced through the teachers' use of strategies studied during staff development.

Moreover, schools investigated in this study have differences in the teachers' perceptions of students' abilities and teachers' approach to the implementation of initiatives. Additionally, the organizational environment also seems to be a factor in the utilization of strategies and techniques presented during staff development. However, to study teachers' perceptions of students' abilities and organizational environment would entail a different scope in the study of staff development. Finally, based on the findings of this case study there seems to be a need to further study staff development as it relates to the implementation of initiatives and utilization of strategies by teachers in ~~low performing schools.~~ in other school levels.

Exhibit 1

COMPARISON OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT DIMENSIONS
Difference between High and Low Performing Campuses

Dimension	Indicator	High Performing	Low Performing
Planning			
	Teachers needs in focus	+	+
	Time allocation	+	-
	Finances provided	+	/
	Instructional resources	+	+
Content			
	District focus	+	+
	Campus initiative	+	+
	Theory aspects	+	+
	Practical aspects	+	-
Continuity			
	Regularly scheduled	+	+
	Set weeks apart	+	-
	Time to implement	+	-
	Time for reflection	+	-
	Send to conference	+	-
	Bring consultants	+	/
Supportive Culture/School Climate			
	Administrative support	+	/
	Collegial assistance	+	-
	Collaboration	+	/
	Sharing ideas	+	/
	Collegial coaching	+	-
	Observe in schools	+	-
	Observe in other districts	+	-

Key
+ Evident
- Not Found
/ Minimal evidence

Table 1

CONTRIBUTIONS OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT
Difference between High and Low Performing Campuses

High Performing	Low Performing
CONTINUOUS STAFF DEVELOPMENT	**CONTINUOUS STAFF DEVELOPMENT**
• Staff development models Trainer of Trainers, Inquiry, Observation/assessment	• Staff development models Trainer of Trainers, Inquiry
• Regularly scheduled	• Regularly scheduled
• Theoretical and practical aspects	• Theoretical aspects
• Time to implement	• No time to implement
• Continuity	• No Continuity
• Sequential and systematic	• Not sequential nor systematic
MAXIMIZED LEARNING TIME	**MAXIMIZED LEARNING TIME**
• Internalization of concepts	• Minimal internalization of concepts
• Utilization of initiatives/strategies	• Optional utilization of initiatives
• Team planning (Horizontal/Vertical)	• Horizontal team planning
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	**LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**
• Inviting atmosphere	• School climate (cold)
• Positive teacher rapport	• Minimal collaboration among teachers
• Teachers' perceptions	• Negative teachers' perceptions
COLLEGIALITY	**COLLEGIALITY**
• Team Work	• Cliques/Isolation
• Mentor system	• No systematic way for collaboration
• Collegial coaching	• Minimal peer assistance

Table 2

APPLICATION OF STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES
Difference between High and Low Performing Campuses

High Performing	Low Performing
• Immediate utilization of strategies • Practical aspects • Collaboration vertically and horizontally • Peer assistance	• Delayed implementation/Minimal use • Theory • Collaboration horizontally • Individual planning predominant

Table 3

SUPPORT OR ASSISTANCE FOR TEACHERS
Difference between High and Low Performing Campuses

High Performing	Low Performing
ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF • Instructional materials and activities • Collaboration among teachers facilitated • Guidance provided • Facilitated conference attendance • Open lines of communication • Facilitated collegial coaching COLLEGIAL SUPPORT • Mentor system • Collegial coaching • Team work	ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF • Instructional materials • Collaboration among teachers encouraged • Assistance available but not utilized • Minimal conference attendance • Barriers to communication • Encouraged peer assistance COLLEGIAL SUPPORT • No systematic way for collaboration • Cliques • Team planning

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Table 4

PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE
Difference between High and Low Performing Campuses

High Performing	Low Performing
• High incidence • Team work among students • Collaboration/cooperation among students • Team products and projects	• Minimal difference • Strategies not used so no difference • Minimal collaboration among students • Individual products

Table 5

OTHER FINDINGS
Difference between High and Low Performing Campuses

High Performing	Low Performing
ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT • Inviting atmosphere • Positive teacher rapport • Teachers' perceptions • Utilization of initiatives/strategies • Immediate utilization of strategies • Team planning (Horizontal/Vertical) • Collaboration vertically and horizontally • Peer assistance TEACHERS' EXPECTATIONS • High expectations • Taught students with new strategies	ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT • School climate • Minimal collaboration among teachers • Negative teachers' perceptions • Optional utilization of initiatives • Delayed implementation/Minimal use • Horizontal team planning • Collaboration horizontally • Individual planning predominant TEACHERS' EXPECTATIONS • Low expectations • Opted not to use new strategies

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